DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 147 227 SO 010 474

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TITLE The Limits of Movement Politics: The Case of British Feminism.
PUB DATE Sep 77
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Washington, D.C., September 1-4, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Activism; Civil Liberties; *Civil Rights; Civil Rights Legislation; Dissent; Economic Climate; Economic Factors; Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Evaluation; Females; *Feminism; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Policy Formation; *Political Influences; Political Power; *Social Action; Social Attitudes; Social Class; *Social History; Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *England

ABSTRACT

Analysis of the British feminist movement from 1850 to 1975 reveals a constant struggle by feminists for equality in the face of legal and social restrictions and a corresponding lack of response by the British government to movement demands. The political organization of the feminist movement is described in four phases. During the first phase, from 1855-1900, feminists were ignored by British political parties. Feminists formed informal societies to deal with education, equal moral standards, sufferage, and employment. The efforts of women activists during the second phase (from 1890-1918) were largely directed toward obtaining votes and jobs for women. During this phase, the Labour party endorsed equal political rights for women, and the National Union of Women's Sufferage Societies and the Womens Social and Political Union replaced the informal societies of the 19th century. During the third phase, which began in 1918, feminists dealt with legal and political rights. However, their efforts were so diversified that they received little national attention until 1960 when the fresh ideology and tactics of the Women's Liberation movement again invigorated the British feminist movement. The fourth phase began in 1968. During this phase the Women's Liberation movement has challenged the Labour Party for leadership of the radical left. Feminist goals now include equal pay, job opportunities, education, day care centers, and free family planning services. Although review of advances made by feminists from 1850-1975 indicates various degrees of success due to tactics, the national political climate, specific movement goals, and expectations of movement leaders, a major advance can be noted in the incorporation of women's rights demands into the party platform of both major parties. (Author/DB)

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# The Limits of Movement Politics: The Case of British Feminism

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Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Meetings, September 1-4, 1977, Washington, D.C.

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# THE LIMITS OF MOVEMENT POLITICS: THE CASE OF BRITISH FEMINISM

## Introduction

Social movements include a mixture of organized and diffuse behavior aimed at change in the social order (Gusfield). The political components of a social movement are the various organizations and their tactics that develop to seek change through political action, be it law reform or revolution. The various types of organizations and tactics that constitute a movement's politics affect the development of a social movement and its impact on the political system and policy decisions. (Smelser) The purpose of this paper is to analyze the politics of the British feminist movement. British feminism has not been a very successful movement as measured by the substantive response of British Government to movement demands. The reason for this limited success may be found, in part, by examining the organizations and tactics used by feminists in pursuit of their various goals.

Feminist movement politics began in the 1850's. At that time women's rights were inferior in nearly every aspect of law and society. The Victorian family structure severely restricted the lives of middle class women. The poverty of factory labor oppressed working women. From the mid-nineteenth century to the present, feminists have pursued their goals of equality, seeking to overturn the legal and social restrictions on their freedom. The political organization of this great movement will be discussed in four phases: First Phase, 1855-1890; Second Phase, 1890-1918; Third Phase, 1918-1967; Fourth Phase, 1967-1975. Information about organizations and their activities comes from a wide variety of sources: interviews with feminist leaders, organization records and publications, writings of feminists, and secondary accounts by historians.

Organizations will be described and classified according to categories suggested by Smelser (1962:274-6). These are:

(1) background of the organization: is it new or already established?

(2) structure: is it formal, having a charter, bylaws and records, or an informal gathering of citizens?

(3) purpose: does it have general interests in women's rights or advocate a specific issue?

(4) class: are leaders from the middle class or working class?

Any organization may be established or new, formal or informal, general or specific, middle class or working class. Where information is available, size and level of organization, whether local or national, will also be included.

Tactics used by organizations to gain access to policy makers include petitions to parliament, personal connections between feminists and politicians, publicity campaigns, testimony before administrative and legislative committees, deputations to parliamentary leaders, nonconventional protest demonstrations and violence. Finally, the relationship between feminist organizations and political parties during each phase will be discussed. Until recently, the limit of effective movement politics by British feminists has been the extent to which British governments would adopt policies not included in party platforms.

## First Phase: 1855-90

I think that the notion that the husband ought to have headship or authority over his wife, is the root of all social evils. It is a doctrine demoralizing alike to men and women. Husband and wife should be co-ordinate and co-equal, each owing to the other entire personal service and devotion, their obligations being strictly reciprocal and mutual.

Lydia Becker

Goals

Five goals occupied the interests of the early feminists: education, married women's rights, equal moral standards, suffrage and employment. In education, they worked to increase the number of schools for girls especially in secondary and higher education and to get local authorities to open examinations to girls. Feminists sought equal property rights and guardianship of children for married women who were subject to poverty and mistreatment enforced by common law couverture. Those arguing for equal moral standards deplored governmental regulation of prostitutes; the Contagious Diseases Acts branded and punished women for prostitution and relieved men of all responsibility. The suffrage demand was moderate: votes for women with the same property qualifications as men. Protecting women's jobs was an issue of less priority than the rest, but some feminists attempted to prevent so-called protective legislation which banned women from certain allegedly dangerous occupations without providing alternative employment.

Organizations and tactics

The first organization of women in Britain to promote women's rights was the Married Women's Property Committee in 1855. It set the pattern for later organizations: new, small, middle class, local and with specific goals. Then, the Englishwoman's Journal began publishing in 1858 and served as a means of communication among women who were concerned about women's rights. The women gathered under the auspices of the Law Amendment Society and later the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. The NAPSS, established in 1857, was the first men's organization to invite women to speak as well as join and sheltered a number of committees with specific

goals, such as the Married Women's Property Committee, The Kensington Society, The Committee for Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the Society for Promoting Employment of Women, the Workhouse Visiting Association, Ladies' National Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge and the Petition Committee for the Suffrage.

Most of the committees were formal with annual meetings and records, and all adhered to basic pattern: small, specific and middle class. There was a great deal of overlap in the membership of these various single issue organizations. A relatively small group of activist women divided the chores among themselves, lending support to each other's projects. The organizational unit was local, rather than national. Occasionally leaders such as Josephine Butler began work in one city and transferred lobbying efforts to London.

From 1870 on, more and more attention and energy focused on the suffrage issue. The attainment of political rights became increasingly important as the various specialized committees found legislators less than interested in demands of non-voters. The suffrage organizations grew and in 1867 suffrage societies in London, Bristol, Manchester, Birgmingham and Edinburgh formed the National Society for Women's Suffrage, the first national feminist organization. Conflict and dissension plagued the organization for the next thirty years.

Feminist organizations depended on parliament, especially a small group of sympathetic Liberal MP's, to sponsor reform bills. Their tactics were to show support in the population for their issues by holding meetings throughout the country, circulating petitions, making public speeches and getting newspaper coverage. Feminist leaders relied especially on personal

communication by conversation, letter, and deputation with prominent Government and parliamentary leaders. They found many MP's to be interested in their demands and expected early success.

Although most feminist leaders were from Liberal and Radical families, special interest pressure groups did not make much effort to influence political parties. Disraeli had expressed personal support for the vote along with most Liberal MP's. Thus it came as a great shock when Gladstone Government refused to allow a woman suffrage amendment to the Reform Act of 1884. Gladstone, it seems, believed women were unfit for politics and other Liberal leaders feared women would support the Conservative Party. After the 1884 defeat, political parties set up women's sections: the Women's Liberal Federation and the Primrose League. However, these did not mean that women's rights issues became a matter of party policy. Gladstone, after whipping his Liberal majority against the suffrage, viewed the WLF as a way of giving women the opportunity of political activity (so they could prove if they were capable). The Conservative's Primrose League was neutral on the issue of suffrage. Whatever these organizations were, whether appeasement or conciliation, tney did not serve to bring parties nearer to the feminist movement.

To summarize the first phase, early feminists formed new organizations to pursue specific issues pertaining to women's rights. By and large these organizations were small, led by the middle class women and formal; several were sponsored by the more general reform group the NAPSS. Feminist organizations sought access to parliament by petitions, personal connections, deputation and public meetings. They did not make connections with political party organizations or leaders. These tactics led to success in some areas

and failures in others. Local examinations were open to women and eventually primary and secondary education. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and the Guardianship of Infants Act of 1886 improved the legal status of married women. The Contagious Diseases Acts were repealed in 1886. However, attempts to protect women's jobs failed: The Factory Acts of 1878 and 1895 restricted hours and occupations of women workers. The Electoral Reform Act of 1884 failed to include women in the franchise.

## Second Phase: 1897-1918

I incite this meeting to rebellion! And my last word is for the Government. You have not dared to take the leaders of the Ulster rebellion for their incitement. Take me, if you will. But I tell you this: that so long as those who incite to armed rebellion and the destruction of human life are at liberty, you shall not keep me in prison. Women in this meeting, although the vote is not yet won, we who are militant are free. Remember only the freedom of the spirit and join this magnificent rebellion of the women of the twentieth century.

Emmeline Pankhurst

### Goals

By the 1890's there were two major issues as yet unattended by the government: votes and jobs for women. The efforts of women activists in the second phase of the feminist movement were almost exclusively devoted to those issues. By far the most effort was concentrated on the suffrage. New organizations and tactics brought The Cause to life and eventually achieved victory. There were complex ideological and organizational connections between the suffrage and working women's demands for rights within the growing Labour movement. This relationship led to the first meaningful endorsement of women's equal political rights by a major political party.

Suffrage organizations and tactics

Two new large national organizations replaced the small scale informal societies of the first phase to carry forth the demand for the vote: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). The NUWSS and WSPU were similar in that they were large, specific and led by middle class women. They were very different in their origins, structure and tactics. The NUWSS was established, a product of the reorganization in 1897 of the National Society for Women's Suffrage with roots in the Petition Committee of 1867. The WSPU was founded in 1904 as a new organization to obtain support from poor women for the vote. The structure of the NUWSS was one that has become familiar among British interest associations. An executive committee in London provided an umbrella to shelter a wide variety of suffrage societies in cities throughout the country. The local organizations recruited members, held public meetings, raised money and sent representatives to the Annual General Meeting. The Executive Committee, led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, carried on the lobbying activities of the group. The WSPU, on the other hand, had little formal structure. It was more in the nature of a rally of women under the strict authoritarian control of Christabel Pankhurst, who made policy, and her mother Emmeline Pankhurst, who rallied the faithful. (A few active women who disagreed with this informal structure left the WSPU and formed the Women's Freedom League in 1907).

The difference in tactics between the two organizations was important and dramatic and divided those who worked for the vote into two groups: "constitutional suffragists" and "militant suffragettes." The NUWSS, the constitutional group, continued the lobbying tactics of its predecessors.

However, by the 1890's, petitions were no longer an effective means of access to British parliament. MP's would do little more than note their receipt in the record. The 1884 defeat by Gladstone convinced the NUWSS that it was useless to try to pursuade parties or Governments. Therefore, they concentrated on bringing their case in the form of a private member Bill. A majority of MP's were known to be in support of women's suffrage. The NUWSS brought the matter to the MP's at the beginning of each session, hoping a member would introduce their Bill. In the meantime they published their paper Common Cause and held suffrage meetings.

The WSPU pursued a policy of militancy. E. Pankhurst had become disillusioned with the constitutional tactics. She saw that the annual deputations to parliament had become a fruitless ritual. MP's always received the women politely and expressed their support for women's suffrage and then "the Members resumed the real business of life which was to support their parties' policies." (Quoted in MacKenzie:20) The WSPU concentrated on the Government believing that the only way to get the suffrage law was by securing a pledge from the Government. When the Government ignored them in 1906 they set forth a program of non-conventional tactics to force the Government to recognize their demand. Militant tactics ("deeds, not words") included questioning Cabinet members at every opportunity about their plans to give votes to women, marches to see the Prime Minister or enter the House of Commons (which were stopped, often violently, by police) active opposition to all government candidates and the most colorful publicity campaign in the country. When arrested, the suffragettes refused fines and went to prison. They went on hunger strikes and endured force-feeding. After 1912, the WSPU increased violent acts against property and by 1914 was nearly at war with the Liberal Government.

The militants and constitutionalists alike increased activities and received a lot of publicity during the period. The Government stubbornly refused to grant their demand. In fact, Prime Minister Asquith pledged to allow votes for women to pass and then failed to keep the promise. Government eventually responded by trying to repress the militants and ignore the constitutionalists. The infamous "Cat and Mouse" Act allowed the police to release hunger-striking suffragettes and them rearrest them when they were well. None of the tactics on either side of this battle seemed to be successful in moving the other side.

Suffrage and the Labour movement

The other main thread of the women's rights movement was its connection with the Labour movement which was also beginning to take effective organizational steps during this period. Before the 1890's trade union women were part of the feminist movement. The Women's Protective and Provident League organized working women and sought to block "protective" legislation which would prevent women from working at certain jobs. In 1889 the Women's Trade Union League, a national labor organization for women, was formed. By the 1900's they began to work for Labour movement goals. The problem became to reconcile demands of women for equality with those of workers for power and socialism.

The basic dilemma facing the woman worker was the following: Should she fight for equality for women in existing society or seek emancipation through a major social revolution? This dilemma pertained to the suffrage question as well. Should votes for women come before full adult (male) suffrage or should adult suffrage be achieved first? Votes for women would mean extending the vote to women householders and rate payers while many men in working class remained disenfranchised.

The WSPU, which had its origins in the Labour movement, sought to gain a commitment from the fledgling Labour Party to put votes for women before adult suffrage. In 1906, E. Pankhurst argued that 90% of the women that would be enfranchised through their proposal had to work for a living as housewives. The International Labour Party, its affiliate the Women's Labour League, and the Trade Unions Council favored votes for women but believed adult suffrage had a higher priority. The Social Democratic Federation opposed votes for women.

In 1907, the WSPU severed connections with the Labour movement and began to concentrate on attracting middle and upper class support. The Panknursts argued that these upper class connections were the best way to influence a Government reluctant to respond to larger democratic issues put forth by Labour. An exception was the WSPU affiliate run by the socialist Pankhurst, Sylvia. Her East London Federation organized working women and argued that the only way they could improve their lot was by the vote. The ELF continued its contacts with Labour, especially the Leader and MP Keir Hardie who supported votes for women. Wholehearted support by the Labour Party for women's suffrage was limited by the demand for adult suffrage and the opposition by some Labour men, especially in the Social Democratic Federation, to women having the vote.

In 1912, when Prime Minister Asquith broke his promise to support a suffrage amendment the Labour Party Conference officially supported votes for women. After that, the NUWSS which had previously avoided taking any stand on parties, began supporting Labour candidates. The WSPU, on the other hand, moved further away from conventional politics and stepped up its program of destruction of property. The final estrangement came

in 1914 when the WSPU ousted the ELF which C. Pankhurst considered to be too socialist. The WSPU continued to stay away from all political parties and eventually in 1917, formed the Woman's Party to field its own candidates.

The other political parties, those with sufficient parliamentary representation to promote votes for women did not consider the suffrage to be a party issue. Extra-parliamentary party conferences had enacted lukewarm resolutions in support of some votes for some women in the 1880's and 90's, but these were not binding on parliamentary parties. The Conservative leaders from Disraeli on tended to be in sympathy with women's demands but refused to commit their party in support. They saw no advantage to the party fortunes. Liberal leaders after 1906 were in a position to promote the issue, but were opposed to the suffrage for both political and personal reasons. They feared that increasing votes among women in the middle and upper classes would help elect more conservatives. Militancy directed against Liberal leadership may have hardened this opposition.

Victory

Until 1914 the political activities of the women's movement focused almost exclusively on securing the vote. National organizations used the widest range of tactics from personal connections, through publicity and all the way to militancy and violence, but to no avail. There was increasing support for The Cause but the Liberal Government remained adamant and none of the political parties would take up the issue. The women's movement was on the outside looking in.

By 1918 The Cause finally achieved victory with the passage of the Representation of the People Act. The mass mobilization of World War I

had convinced the coalition government of the need to expand the suffrage to include more men. Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1917, and he did not oppose women's suffrage. The NUWSS, the constitutionalists, had maintained their connections with parliament on the suffrage issue, while militants both left and right concentrated on the issues of war and peace. The constitutionalists were represented on the committee that drafted the suffrage bill by a feminist, Sir John Simon, and the draft included votes for women, although not on an equal basis with men. The Labour women were persuaded to support this compromise. A demonstration by women war workers and deputations to the Prime Minister took place. The Bill passed by a large majority in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The feminist movement achieved its victory without gaining the official support of political party leaders in the major parties. It did succeed in getting a nod from Labour but equality for women was not an issue whole-hearted embraced by workers and trade unions. The Labour Party by no means became a champion of the women's movement. Meanwhile the women had learned a great deal about organizational efforts and tactics, and it appeared that at the end it was the constitutionalist tactics, not militancy, that was finally successful in putting votes for women over the top.

## Third Phase: 1918-1967

> New feminism demands that the whole structure and movement of society shall reflect in a proportionate degree [women's] experiences, their needs, and their aspirations.
>
> Eleanor Rathbone

### Goals

In the first decade after the suffrage, feminists concentrated on furthering women's legal and political rights until Parliament finally

enacted equal universal suffrage in 1928. They turned then to economic issues. This topic brought out deep divisions among feminist groups splitting organizations and undermining strength. The old feminists insisted on absolute equality for women in the work force with equal training and pay. The new feminists wanted recognition of the differences between men and women. They argued that women's special physical and emotional responsibilities made it impossible for them to compete on an equal basis with men without special help. By the Thirties, support for both forms of feminism dwindled. The movement dissipated from a fervent cause to a series of overworked reform proposals. It wasn't until the late 1960's that the women's demands for equality again came to public attention.

Organizations and tactics

The NUWSS became the major feminist organization after 1918 while the WSPU and the Pankhursts faded away. Its new name, National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, reflected its interest in a wide variety of women's rights issues. The NUSEC had the same formal organization as its predecessor: a group of established local societies of middle class women united under a national executive committee. A few new feminist groups appeared such as the Six Point Group, the Open Door Council and the Women's Service League. They too were formal middle class organizations but much smaller than the NUSEC. All of these bodies concentrated their efforts on Parliament, through deputations, public meetings, testimony and letters to committees, and circulating private member Bills. Eleanor Rathbone and Eva Hubback of the NUSEC, Lady Rhondda of the Six Point Group, Lady Balfour of the Open Door Council had personal connections with prominant MP's.

After 1928 a major disagreement over feminist goals split the NUSEC. The President, Eleanor Rathbone, who had been a constitutional suffragist, became a proponent of the new feminism. Whereas old feminism advocated complete legal equality for men and women, new feminisim recognized that women's lives as mothers made them different from men. If forced to compete with men in the economy, women would always lose. Therefore they needed special programs such as family allowances and birth control services. The old feminists protested the new programs and left the NUSEC, joining the Open Door Council, the Six Point Group and Women's Freedom League. These small groups, often following a single strong leader, carried forth the doctrine of absolute equality into the 1950's and 60's.

Meanwhile the new feminists had a potentially revolutionary doctrine on their hands. They were the first in the British women's movement to consider the relationship between woman's role in the family and in the economy. Potentially, woman's role as wife and mother was as political as issues like equal pay and job opportunity. But to disturb the family went beyond reform to social revolution. Things did not go that far because new feminism in the 1930's surfaced in a moderate middle class lobbying organization, the NUSEC. New feminism did not develop into the revolutionary ideology but found expression in Rathbone's reform proposal for family allowances. The NUSEC reorganized again in 1932 and 1945 but membership dwindled. Its remnants in the 1950's was a small organization called the National Association of Women Citizens.

Some special interest groups organized during the period. Most of these advocated changes in specific laws such as abortion, divorce or marriage. They consisted of little more than an executive committee, a secretary who ran things, a list of honorary vice-presidents and a few

subscribers who received a newsletter. Such single issue groups are numerous on the British political scene. They seek to get a Member to introduce a private member Bill in hopes that enough support will be shown to convince the Government to sponsor it.

Women's service organizations such as the National Council of Women and the British Federation of Business and Professional Women grew during this third phase. They offered services and activities through local organizations. The national office sponsored annual meetings and maintained liaison on legislative issues of concern to women. These were general advocacy groups for women and were formal, established, middle class and large. As bills of interest to women came up in parliament these service organizations informed members, wrote position papers, adopted resolutions and wrote letters to Parliament. Increasingly, they presented testimony to government committees on policies affecting the economic and family life of women.

The general feminist organizations, the special interest groups, and the service organizations all survived into the 1950's. Except for the service organizations which had substantial membership, they were sustained by small groups of dedicated leaders who kept the flame alive. In 1958 when Joan Vickers MP (now Lady Vickers) formed the Status of Women Committee there were 18 organizations that sent representatives proving that the political side of the feminist movement had not disappeared. The Committee met annually and passed old feminist style resolutions advocating equal pay, equal education and equal legal status. In 1968, they organized a special celebration and demonstration to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the suffrage.

Although there were prominent feminists in the political parties, their tactics did not include influencing parties' policies, and, although parties had women's organizations, they did not advocate feminist issues. The Labour Party sponsored women's organizations and held an annual National Conference of Labour Women. The Labour Women concentrated on class, not sex, oppression. Their view was expressed by Susan Lawrence MP commemorating the first Women's Chairman, Marion Philips (quoted in Report of National Conference of Labour Women, 1932):

> She was alive as few people were to the special wrongs and hardships women suffer; but she was very far from the spirit of that narrow thing called feminism. She was too good a socialist not to know that, in politics, the class division is greater than any sex division; that precisely as any trade unionist ought to be interested in his own trade, but is a poor creature if he cannot look beyond that to the movement as a whole: so the woman and mother who has a special interest of the home to consider, but must realize also that she is part of the people, and can only obtain happiness and security with the people as a whole.

Although the Labour Women Party occasionally spoke of equal pay and jobs for women they did not pursue these issues wholeheartedly. Men in trade unions believed women would work for lower pay and were thus a threat to their own jobs. Although Labour supported the idea of family allowances, trade union men wanted the payments to go to the husbands and not the wives. After the war, the Trade Union Congress began to take an interest in organizing women workers. In 1951, they established the Women's Advisory Committee to coordinate women's organizations within the TUC.

The Conservative Party organized women and established a Women's National Advisory Committee in 1928. These organizations, like the Women's Liberal Federation, were to recruit women campaign workers and support Party candidates. It was not until the 1960's that the Conservative Party women's sections began to propose policy to improve the status

of women.

Both Conservatives and Labour recognized that women were voters to be organized but not a source of policy. They still believed, it appears, that the issues of interest to women were furthered by concentrating on what men wanted. Thus, extending the franchise did not immediately influence parties to include feminist policy demands in party policy. Even Labour Party which paid lip service to equal pay did little after achieving their first clear majority in 1945.

From the contemporary perspective, the third phase of British feminism was a transition. The movement, which had been a large and colorful revolutionary struggle against male domination, became a number of scattered groups working for moderate law reforms. They were successful in changing a few laws: equal divorce grounds, equal property rights, equal guardianship of children, equal suffrage, and Rathbone's family allowance Act. But none of the feminists' basic demands for an equal place with men in British politics and society were achieved. While a few women were admitted to Parliament by the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (but not to the House of Lords), thousands of married women were fired from jobs to make room for men. The split between old and new feminists further weakened the organizational effort. Other reform movements of the Thirties and Forties, especially socialism, claimed the energy of the sort that had been devoted to votes for women. Not all the feminists left the struggle. A few continued their limited lobbying efforts for equality into the 1960's. Then, they got some help in the form of a fresh ideology and new organizations and tactics from Women's Liberation.

## Fourth Phase: 1968-1975

Woman's situation can only be fundamentally changed by a total transformation of all existing social relations.

Sheila Rowbotham

### Goals

The Left has been the source of change in British politics. Feminists have had to compete with socialists and workers for influence among Leftist reformers and revolutionaries. Until the fourth phase, feminists have lost these battles and socialists have generally ignored their demands. Now the radical feminist ideology of Women's Liberation has challenged socialism for leadership of the radical Left.

Radical feminist theory, similar to Marxism in form, seeks to remedy the irrelevance of woman's condition to socialism. Radical feminists argue that sex not class divisions are the source of social oppression. Male dominance is maintained in all societies whether capitalist or socialist through psychological controls exerted over women from birth. Women must unite to fight against male dominance. Radical feminists and socialists agree that women's inferior position cannot be improved without basic changes in the family. Production in modern capitalist society depends on maintaining a cheap reserve labor force of women for times of crisis and is sustained by private unpaid work in home care and child care by wives and mothers. The sexual division of labor is reinforced by the ideology of the family which values women according to their service to men rather than for their own individuality.

Women's Liberation has led modern feminists to concentrate on the theoretical basis of their movement as well as search for new organizational forms and tactics in achieving their goals. Feminists now advocate change

in every aspect of society. Every social structure is subject to political effort in order to achieve this expanded notion of equality. Specific goals were adopted at the first Woman's Liberation National Conference in Oxford in 1970: equal pay and equal job opportunities, equality in education, twenty-four hour child care nurseries and free contraception and abortion on demand. In 1974 Lesbian rights and financial and legal independence were added to the agenda. At the same time, moderate feminists concentrated on seeking laws preventing discrimination in employment and education.

Organization and tactics

The foundation of Women's Liberation is the small informal group. At first, these were discussion groups emphasizing personal development and ideology. Then they formed the organizational basis for major radical feminist political tactic: the campaign. For the campaign forms are developed to fit particular goals. In other words, women who are working on a project must develop their own tactics.

Campaigns are launched with the help of several umbrella organizations which may be national or based in a major city. The umbrella organizations are new, informal and support a wide range of feminist goals. Their membership size varies, but most of the leaders are middle class. The oldest group is the Women's Liberation Workshop in London (1969). It has a radical feminist ideology and generally excludes men from all activities. WLW has scheduled meetings and demonstrations on a wide varity of issues. In 1971 a National Coordinating Committee for Women's Liberation formed to plan national conferences. Other umbrella groups include Women's Aid Centres, providing services to battered women, Aware and the Women's Research and Resource Centre, which supports research by women and about women.

Specific campaign organizations are informal and groups shy away from the formality and rules they associate with male-dominated society. Rather than have formal officers they are more likely to break up into task forces for various aspects of the campaign. A representative list of campaign groups includes: the National Joint Action Committee for Women's Equal Rights (1969) promoting equal pay; the Cleaners Action Group (1970) to organize night cleaners into labor unions; Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign (1972); Sex Discrimination Act Campaign (1972); Campaign for Financial and Legal Independence (1974); Women and Psychiatry Workshop; Women's Family Allowance Campaign (1974); Mothers in Action; Working Women's Charter Campaign (1974). The Working Women's Charter Campaign has more general goals than most campaign groups: equal pay, equal job opportunity, equal education, equal working conditions, legal equality, child care, maternity leave, contraception and abortion, increased family allowances, increased participation in unions.

In general, campaign tactics do not concentrate on traditional parliamentary lobbying and instead seek to encourage individual women to fight for their own goals on a local level. The campaign leaders will publicize the issues by distributing brochures. Activists appear on television talk shows and in magazine features. They hold meetings to attract interested women. Their tactic is to keep the issues before the public and make women aware of the injustices they suffer and what they can do about them. Occasionally they will sponsor a public demonstration.

Some of the old feminist organizations and women's service groups such as the NCW, the BPW and the Six Point Group continue their lobbying efforts. Although they do not receive as much publicity as the more radical Women's Liberation campaigns, in fact, these moderate reformers have more direct

contact with policy makers. Aiding them in the lobbying effort are some other established interest groups that have taken up various women's rights issues. Representative of these is the National Council for Civil Liberties. In 1973, the NCCL established a women's rights section. The Council has a large middle class membership, formally organized with well established contacts with parliament and political parties and other interest groups. The women's rights group studies various issues such as rape, battered women and sex discrimination and publishes reports often with recommendations for legislation. Specialists in these various areas testify before investigative committees.

The changes in feminist influence in political parties has had the most immediate effect on the legislative success of the fourth phase. For the first time, both parties have advocated and sponsored legislation to improve the economic and legal status of women. The Labour Party formed a study group to explore the status of women in 1967. The plight of women workers came to national attention in 1968 with the women machinists' strike at Ford's. They protested unequal pay and being barred from certain jobs on the basis of their sex. The Labour Party study committee then published two reports: one in 1968 on social security and another in 1972: an opposition Green paper entitled "Discrimination Against Women." The Green Paper covered a large number of economic issues as well as law and marriage. In 1970, the Labour Government passed the Equal Pay Act. In 1973 the Party adopted Green Paper recommendations as part of its Programme. And, in 1975, the Wilson Government passed the Anti-Discrimination Act which deals with education and employment and establishes the Equal Opportunity Commission.

The Conservative Party has also been interested in women's issues. The Women's National Advisory Committee of the Conservative Party working with women Conservative MP's prepared a report with recommendations in 1967, "Fair Shares for the Fair Sex," followed by "Opportunity for Women." As with the Labour Party, these reports covered a wide range of education, economic and social issues and led to Conservative Government proposals for its own Anti-Discrimination Bill in 1973. Both parties were affected by demands of their women members, especially the women in Parliament. The changes in the fourth phase have changed the priorities of political women for legislation, from home and family to employment and education.

Thus the fourth phase of the British feminist movement has brought about the richest variety of political organization and tactics thus far. Moderate feminists are successfully advocating that women's rights issues of employment and education be policy concerns of party government. Reform and service organizations continue to lobby Parliament presenting evidence and opinion to MP's and committees. The energy of Women's Liberation has brought public attention to feminist issues. Of more importance in the long run may be the effect of the radical feminist theory and small group organization on women in their personal lives. If, as the radical feminists maintain, the intimate family relations of women and men are crucial to the political and economic relations of the sexes, they could launch the most revolutionary phase of British feminism.

## Conclusion

An analysis of the various organizations and tactics in social movement politics reveals that certain types of organizations tend to accompany various political tactics. In the British feminist movement three distinct

types of approaches have been used over the years to gain access to decision-makers and improve the status of women: lobbying, militancy and the campaign. Each approach gives rise to a particular type of organization. As the tactics change so do the organizational forms.

Lobbying has been used by organizations in all phases, especially during the first and third. The object of lobbying is to pass reform legislation. The tactics include petitions to parliament, personal communications, letter writing, finding sponsors for private Bills and giving testimony before government committees. Lobbying organizations tend to be middle class and formally organized with an executive committee, annual meeting and a newsleter. They may concentrate on one issue or have a general interest in matters that pertain to women's rights. In the first phase groups were more specific, later, more general.

Militancy involved a special set of tactics used by three organizations in pursuit of votes for women during phase II. These tactics included disruption of Government business and eventually violence against property and themselves. Militants formed new organizations, authoritarian, and dominated by middle class leaders but with few formal rules. They tended to be single purpose and used the militant tactics to achieve one goal.

The third approach, the campaign, developed during the fourth phase. The campaign employs tactics to mobilize women to speak out for their rights by preparing and distributing leaflets and pamphlets, making public speeches, and sponsoring group meetings. Campaign groups are small and informal, emphasizing participant democracy. They arise as new issues become important. Most of the leadership is middle class although one of the goals of the campaign groups is to recruit more working women to the movement. Campaign groups depend on several umbrella groups with more formal organization to provide communicationsand other needed facilities.

Why do particular organizations and tactics develop in a movement and what accounts for changes in movement politics? There are three likely explanations based on the case of British feminism. First, the poltiical system sets certain constraints. Organizers in the movement patterned their organizations along lines of other interest groups in society seeking legislation reforms. Feminist leaders have had experience in working on other issues before getting involved in the movement. They adapted those practices to the new problem. Established groups who get interested in women's issues also rely on these conventional approaches. Given the widespread use of lobbying style among interest groups in British politics it is not surprising that middle class feminists tended to adopt the same tactics and structure.

Secondly, specific goals of the movement may account for particular types of organizations and tactics. During the first three phases many activists were concerned with law reform. However, the ideology of Women's Liberation has broadened the definition of politics to include the family and other social relations. Family roles are not likely to alter through Act of Parliament but by individual changes. Thus the campaign approach to reach as many women as possible is more consistent with these expanded goals than lobbying.

Third, the expectation of movement leaders may account for structural changes. The different patterns of suffrage organizations after 1904 can be understood by examining the perspectives of leaders toward Government. The constitutionalists disillusioned by Government's refusal to support the suffrage hoped for a private member Bill that would get enough support to force the Government to act. The militants saw that MP's were guided by party leaders and the only way for the Bill to be successful was as part of the Government's program. This led them to pressure Government directly

and openly and soon develop a policy of disruption. Emmeline Pankhurst argued that no human rights were ever attained except through violence.

Although feminists have used a wide variety of tactics and organizations and expended a tremendous effort over 120 years, Governments' response to feminist demands has been sparse and slow. There was some legislation in the first phase such as, the Married Women's Property Act, repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts and educational opportunities. There were also major defeats especially in employment and suffrage. The second phase ended with two Acts: suffrage for property owners over 30 and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. These had been preceded by another type of response--repression through the Cat and Mouse Act. In the third phase there were a few law reforms: equal grounds for divorce, equal guardianship of children and finally full suffrage. Noteworthy Acts in the fourth phase are the Anti Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act, both with some startling loopholes and exceptions to equal economic and education opportunity. Over all that time until the last two Acts, no governing party made women's rights a part of its program. When Government did sponsor a Bill and called upon their majority for support, it was usually at the end of a long struggle over a private member Bill, as with the MWPA and the suffrage.

Why have British Cabinets been so reluctant to take up the issue of women's rights? Why has feminist movement politics been so much less successful in gaining government attention than the Labour movement or the male suffrage movement? The answer clearly lies in the failure of the feminist movement politics to gain access to policy making in political party organizations or to form a viable party. The Labour, Liberal Conservative Parties have been interested in attracting the women's support but have not seen that organizing women should change party policy.

At the beginning, feminists believed they had the proper connections. Most parliamentary Liberals and their Annual Conference supported women's suffrage and Conservative Disraeli was openly in sympathy. Then, when Gladstone actively killed women's suffrage in 1884, leaders gave up on political parties and worked on individual MP's. WSPU gave up on Labour and concentrated on defeating the Liberal Government. The political party leaders refused to make women's rights a party issue. Conservatives saw no votes to be gained and Liberals saw many to be lost if women voted. In addition, many thought women were really not capable of equal rights and responsibility for an entire Empire. The Liberals lost power after 1918 and Labour became the party of reform and change. But Labour didn't take up the feminist cause either.

After 1918 feminism failed to find a spot on the Left because of the "class paradox" of feninism. Most of the feminists were middle class, yet incapable of unified effort due to divisions over ideology. Some argued for complete equality but others wanted to help working class women with special problems. The new feminists failed to gain the support of working women. Workers, some of whom were active in trade unions, placed the goals of Labour ahead of women's rights and Labour Party women reflected that view. The division among women over women's rights continued in the conflict between feminism and socialism. Socialists wanted to abolish the power of capitalists over workers and said women would automatically be better off in socialist society. Feminists wanted to abolish domination of men over women in all classes.

The major difference between phase IV and earlier phases has been the incorporation of women's rights demands into party platform of both major parties. Both Leaders have sponsored legislation and the Labour Party

Government put the Equal Pay Act and Anti-Discrimination Act through as part of their program. What has happened to break the deadlock between the feminists and the political parties? It is the women already in the parties who have been most affected by the growth of the women's rights movement of the 1960's. Both parties have a number of political women as MP's and peers as well as in local government and party organizations. Now nearly all of them support women's rights and are anxious that their parties promote proper legislation. Women used their influence with party organizations to propose policy and then incorporate it into the party program.

Despite the advances made by feminists in gaining some access to political parties, Women's Liberation remains outside conventional politics. Certainly with the ideology of radical feminism they are more comfortable outside the political establishment. Their campaign tactics concentrate on liberating individual women who might then be active toward achieving feminist goals through more conventional channels. Many remaining conventional groups view recent legislation as a real success and expect the Equal Opportunity Commission to take up the burden of promoting equal rights. The lobbying activities of conventional groups may subside until they get concerned about the issues currently being raised by Women's Liberation: battered women, rape, abortion, financial and legal independence, and Lesbian rights. It remains to be seen if political parties can be convinced to incorporate these issues along with employment and education into party programs.

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